STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION GROUP ON FOOD CHEMICAL OCCURRENCE DATA

13th Meeting

5 June 2025

14:00-18:00

Minutes agreed on 15/09/2025

Location: EFSA – Parma and online

Attendees:

- **Discussion Group Members:**

ORGANISATION	NAME
European Food Coffee Federation	Giovanni Lamberti
Natural Food Colours Association	Fabienne Zeugin
Tea & Herbal Infusions Europe - THIE	Cordelia Kraft
Food Supplements Europe	Patrick Coppens
FEDIOL - EU vegetable oil and protein meal association	Angeliki Stavropoilou
ICGA-Europe	Christophe Lepretre
FRUCOM	Joao Pereira
EUPPA - European Potato Processors' Association	Alessandro Piccione
UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe	Patrice Commarmond
UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe	Stefan Ronsmans
European Dairy Association	Fanny Courivaud
PROFEL	Sabina Mirauta
Spirit Europe	Mario Gregori
FoodDrinkEurope	Ricard Celorio
CAOBISCO	Eleonora Alquati
Specialised Nutrition Europe (SNE)	Matteo Lazzari
Specialised Nutrition Europe (SNE)	Kata Hejjas
Specialised Nutrition Europe (SNE)	Evangelia Mavromichali
EU Specialty Food Ingredients	Charlotte Bercovici
EUROMALT	Gianluca Nurra

- **European Commission**
  Ivana Poustkova, Frans Verstraete

- **EFSA:**
  IDATA Unit: ABBINANTE Fabrizio (Head of IDATA Unit), BOCCA Valentina, BROCCA Daniela, FABRILE Maria Pia, GUTIERREZ LINARES Alicia, IOANNIDOU Sofia, MARCHESE Emanuela, MITOULA Vaia, TRIACCHINI Giuseppe Antonio (Chair), ZORMPAS Alexios;
  FIP Unit: Alexandra Tard;
  MESE Unit: FERREIRA DE SOUSA Rita Sofia, GOMEZ RUIZ Jose Angel, HORVATH Zsuzsanna;
  NIF Unit: MENDES Vania, DE SESMAISONS Agnès;
  FEEDCO Unit: ROVESTI Elena;

1. Welcome, adoption of the agenda. Quick tour of self-presentation of participants and temporary observers

The Chair welcomed the StaDG Members participating online and all attendees present in the room. A brief tour de table followed, during which each participant introduced themselves. The agenda for the 13th meeting was then adopted without modifications.

2. Update on current Chemical Monitoring (ChemMon) data collection

EFSA presented an update on the ongoing 2025 ChemMon data collection, focusing on the data received and the harmonized timelines previously established in collaboration with the European Commission and the Chemical Monitoring Data Network (Member States). The update covered key milestones related to data transmission, submission, validation, and the provisional timeline for the 2026 ChemMon data collection (ChemMon 2026).

As last year, EFSA presented the structure and content of the dedicated Microsoft Teams channels. These channels include shared files and resources aimed at facilitating knowledge exchange on data collection with industry stakeholders. Topics covered include use-level data, presence data, and occurrence data for food additives and flavourings, as well as occurrence data for chemical contaminants (analytical data).

Industry data providers were encouraged to visit the Teams channel folders and familiarize themselves with the available supporting materials to prepare for next year's data submissions.

The attendees expressed concern regarding the timeline for the data transmission asking for a revision of the established dates for transmission, submission, and validation of data. EFSA replied that, while some flexibility may be possible in exceptional cases, submission deadlines are critical for completing data validation and analysis in time for the annual report.

3. Initiative on monitoring and surveillance data for enhancing EFSA chemical risk assessment.

Access to reliable chemical monitoring data is a prerequisite for better informed risk assessment and risk management, as it will enable to account for the most realistic exposure conditions to chemicals'.

EFSA already established a framework for systematic and harmonised collection of relevant chemical monitoring data in food and feed from EU enforcement and research laboratories. However, additional monitoring and surveillance data (i.e., environmental, consumer products, etc.) are needed to advance future risk assessments (e.g., in terms of use and exposure scenarios). In 2024 EFSA has launched an initiative, which will end in November 2025.

The aim of the project is to identify and prioritise EFSA's data needs for advancing HHRA (human Health RA), AHRA (Animal Health RA) and ERA (Environmental RA) identify, and map relevant data sources, and provide recommendations for data access and generation. This project is a first milestone to prepare the ground for other planned developments in HHRA, AHRA and ERA to allow EFSA to identify opportunities for reusing existing monitoring and surveillance data (i.e. either through connection or collection), and if not accessible or non-reusable, initiate projects for the generation of new data. The focus of the project is on monitoring and surveillance data that could indicate presence of chemicals. This is not restricted to analytical laboratory measurements only; it may also include other types of data such as pesticide usage surveys, trade volumes, etc.

The outcome of the proposed activities would allow EFSA to better prepare for future challenges in HHRA, AHRA and ERA, and support collaboration with other research and risk assessment bodies at EU level.

4. Food additives/Food flavourings - 2025 data collection

EFSA presented the 2025 data collection for food additives and food flavourings in three sections: open calls, progress of the data collection, and future plans.

The open calls for data were presented. The general call for food additives was presented together with the priority list of food additives to be re-evaluated or assessed as a follow-up. Additionally, the call for food additives and food flavourings under the monitoring programme was presented along with the five substances being collected for the first pilot.

Some general information about the data collection was presented, including the type of data, the resources prepared to support data providers, and the timelines for data transmission and validation.

An overview of the data collected so far was presented in relation to the use levels and analytical data. The results showed that all the substances under the monitoring programme were represented, with several food legislative categories covered, the most represented being Beverages and Confectionery.

During the final part it was explained how the collected data will be used. Scientific opinions and exposure and risk assessments were mentioned, as well as the scientific annual report, which will be published for the first time after the pilot 1. This report will be published by March 2026, and it will contain two main sections: an overview of the collected data by data provider and substance, and the exposure assessment under several scenarios.

Finally, the approach that EFSA would like to follow in terms of data publication was introduced. Data will be published as annexes in the scientific annual report, as it is done in the Scientific Opinions. It will also be published in Zenodo, as is already done for analytical data in other domains, with fields masked and anonymized if required by the data provider.

Additionally, information was provided on the PAD (Public Access to Documents) process and the data elements that EFSA proactively protects based on an existing agreement with the ChemMon Network. If further confidential requests are needed,

they need to be justified in accordance with Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

At the end of this presentation, the simplification of the reporting tool was requested. EFSA replied that to achieve a good data quality it is necessary include all established data elements, point already discussed in the 12th StaDG-ChemOccD meeting.

5. Update on the Rebuild project

EFSA provided an update on the ongoing Rebuild Data Framework (DF) project, aimed at modernising how data is ingested, managed, and analysed within the organisation. One of the first tangible outputs is the DietEx tool, which estimates dietary exposure and offers both a user interface and an API for machine-to-machine communication.

The presentation focused on the development of a new data ingestion and management system under Work Package 2 (WP2). This includes a first wave of implementation - currently underway - which will replace the existing data collection systems (DCF, SAS, and MicroStrategy). A second wave will follow, extending the solution to cover additional use cases. Development is being carried out using an iterative approach, structured around a backlog and sprints.

EFSA also introduced the main tools and platforms being adopted in the project, including Azure Cloud, Databricks, and Power BI. The solution under development will enable data providers to interact with the system through multiple channels, including a user-friendly web portal, APIs, EFSA's own environment and tools for data preparation, validation, and submission, or dashboards for analysis and insights.

6. Data needs for the risk assessment of plant preparations and related compounds

EFSA presented an overview of its preparatory work in anticipation of potential new mandates under Article 8(2) of Regulation (EC) 1925/2006, concerning the safety assessment of selected plant preparations and related compounds. The presentation was structured to provide the context and rationale for regulation, an outline of the expected scope of the potential mandates, a description of the types of data EFSA will require from stakeholders, and an update on next steps.

EFSA explained that the expected mandates could cover different plant preparations and individual substances identified in the Heads of Food Safety Agencies report[1] as priorities. These are substances that are added to foods or used in manufacturing processes, and for which there is evidence of intake levels exceeding what would normally be expected from a balanced diet, and of potential health risks.

In order to perform the risk assessments, EFSA will rely on data provided by stakeholders, together with other available scientific evidence. The presentation detailed the main data needs:

- Proposed uses and use levels of the substances in food products, including the full range of food matrices, labelled doses, recommended frequencies, and any population-specific advice.
- Occurrence data in foods, both from deliberate addition and from natural occurrence, with analytical details such as content, methods, and respective limits of detection.

Examples of previous data calls for fennel, berberine, and hydroxycitric acid (HCA) were also shared, to illustrate the type and level of detail EFSA is looking for, as well as the inclusion of toxicological and biological data to support hazard characterisation.

Finally, EFSA outlined next steps. Formal calls for data will be announced once mandates are confirmed, and stakeholders will be informed in advance through the EFSA website and other communication channels. An additional round of data collection is expected in the framework of EFSA's chemical monitoring programme in 2026–2027, with timelines still under discussion.

The presentation concluded by emphasising the importance of early planning and stakeholder collaboration to ensure timely and robust data collection, which will inform EFSA's risk assessments and contribute to safeguarding consumer health and ensuring regulatory consistency across the EU.

As final remark, an attending association asked further information about timeline and the methodology that will be adopted for data transmission. EFSA clarified that the mandate is still pending and therefore, all the inputs provided will be taken into consideration during the discussion for the mandate.

7. The data needs of the safety of conventionally smoked food mandate.

EFSA presented the different steps of the mandate about smoked food. In 2022, EFSA received 8 applications to renew the authorisation for smoked flavour in primary products and following these applications 8 opinions were published in 2023 which were raising concern on genotoxicity. Four compounds, the furan-2(5H)-one, catechol, styrene and benzofuran were highlighted as the main component of smoke flavouring primary products to be investigated. Following these opinions, EFSA received a mandate to assess the safety of smoked foods, which are produced with conventional smoking processes. In addition to the abovementioned substances, other contaminants of interest, including but not limited to PAHs (Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) were included in this mandate.

The mandate is asking to provide a scientific opinion to assess the safety of smoked meat, fish and cheese, which are produced with conventional smoking processes, including salt and spices. The data collection was introduced, and the importance of determined variables was described.

8. Reporting data on food supplements and foods to be diluted before consumption

EFSA presented what are the challenges encountered when working with data on food supplements and concentrated/powdered foods. In particular, the desirable level

of detail was specified when submitting data to avoid the need of sending clarification requests during the data cleaning and validation step of the exposure assessments.

Currently available variables in the data models to share this information were highlighted, as well as the relevant base terms and facets in EFSA's FoodEx2 classification and description system. In addition, possible combinations of physical formats (e.g. powdered, liquid, chewable) and intended uses (e.g. to be diluted) of these products were listed, specifying how to code/report the different cases.

Recent updates and possible future extension of the FoodEx2 facets were also presented. Finally, the Discussion Group was informed about the upcoming update of EFSA's guidance 'Report on the harmonisation of dilution factors to be used in the assessment of dietary exposure', which is frequently used as a reference when dilution factors are missing in the data and an ad-hoc solution has to be found by the exposure assessor.

An association remarked at the end of the presentation the difficulty encountered in filling out the reporting tool; also, a request to update the categorization of food supplements was advanced. EFSA replied that a project on food supplements to collect more reliable consumption data will take place.

9. Updates related to Food additives: Guidance for applications and FAIM tool

An update on two activities on-going in the food additives area was provided.

The guidance on the preparation of an application for authorisation of a food additive submitted under Reg (EC) No 1331/2008 is under revision and its adoption at the FAF plenary has been postponed to September 2025.The section related to the proposed uses and exposure assessment was presented, with details on the data to be provided and the scenarios to perform.

Then, the new version of the FAIM tool was also introduced. Screenshots of the Alpha version of the tool were shown with explanation on the new exposure scenarios that this version will allow to perform. This version 3.0.0 will be available from July 2025, while the version 2.1 will no longer receive updates or maintenance.

10. Use of data from industry in EFSA risk assessment activities

An overview was provided on the use of the chemical occurrence data submitted by industry in EFSA risk assessment activities. Details were given particularly on the use of the data in three different domains: contaminants, botanical and food additives. As regards contaminants, ongoing assessments such as the one on lead and the one on *Alternaria toxins* are making use of data submitted by several stakeholders.

Data submitted on infusions and food supplements among other samples are also being considered in two on-going risk assessments on botanicals, one on the safety

of preparations from the fruits of sweet and bitter fennel and one on the safety of plant preparations containing berberine.

An overview was also provided on recently published and ongoing scientific opinions, re-evaluation and applications, related to food additives where in particular use levels submitted by industry are a key part of the assessment. The presentation was concluded by presenting the different open calls for data in the different domains.

11. Discussion

The Chair gave the floor for the open discussion, inviting experts to share their thoughts considering all the input coming from the different points of agenda.

In relation to the presentation of Food Additives and Food Flavourings Data Collection 2025, a clarification on the meaning of reporting "No presence data" was requested. It was asked to clarify the difference between the transmission of "No presence data" and the case in which the organization does not submit data.

EFSA explained that the request of submitting "No presence Data" was agreed at the beginning for the Food Additives and Food Flavourings analytical data and, subsequently, the submission of "No presence Data" was also extended to usage level data, intended as a complementary information. According to this, EFSA clarified that, in case of submission, "No presence data" will be used as evidence that the food additives are not used in the production process of that food category. Moreover, EFSA highlighted the relevance in submitting "No presence data" in relation to the need of understanding the trend in the usage of a certain type of food additives. In particular, the submission of "No presence data" allows to investigate which type of food additive is most frequently employed by the food business operator. EFSA clarified that the reported data will be mainly used to refine the exposure assessment to avoid an overestimation or underestimation of the exposure of population to certain types of food additives.

Another raised point during the discussion was related to understand whether the substances listed in the Annex III of Regulation EC 1333/2008 - Union list of food additives including carriers approved for use in food additives, food enzymes, food flavourings, nutrients and their conditions of use – should be analysed and transmitted to EFSA within the Food Additives and Food Flavourings Data Collection. EFSA replied that these substances can be included in data transmission to EFSA thanks to the new introduced reporting tool.

EFSA concluded remarking the importance of collecting as much data as possible to understand the trend in the presence or not of food additives and food flavourings in certain type of food categories with the final aim to refine the exposure assessment and therefore, support the exposure assessor.

Also, in relation to transmit "No presence data", it was emphasized by the attending associations that it can be a complex concept to understand because there are some additives that can be employed in niche products, and some industries do not necessarily always report it. In other terms, the company can choose to skip that call for data and, in that case, it would be good practice to double check with the trade association.

EFSA affirmed that the 2025 Data Collection for Food Additives and Food Flavourings is in the pilot phase and therefore, the process of data collection might need further improvements to be implemented.

Overall, the debate was mainly based on some concerns expressed by the associations in relation to the submission of "No presence data" to EFSA, the publication of the scientific annual report in 2026, and timeline for data transmission.

EFSA replied that even if the current year represents the pilot year for the Food Additives and Food Flavourings Data Collection, the methodology that will be adopted for the risk assessment is well-established given that it is the same used in all scientific opinions. EFSA clarified the meaning of *Pilot* explaining that, at this stage, the quality of data will be monitored together with all the uncertainties that surround the verdict of the assessment.

In the last part of discussion, EFSA commented on the results of the opinion survey after the 12th StaDG in Brussels. The answers collected displayed the positive opinions of participants about different aspects of the meeting. Moreover, EFSA proposed setting up two meetings per year.

12. Conclusions

EFSA thanks for the discussion and all the suggestions and improvement and commitment for data transmission.